

INFORMATION REPORT INFORMATION REPORT

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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1. Beginning approximately in 1952 or later, and particularly after Stalin's death, the prestige of Communist parties in the West was shaken and in many cases began to deteriorate, i.e., the prestige of Communist parties in capitalistic countries, [redacted] began to fall in the eyes of the people. Crudely speaking, it can also be said that, in most cases, the capitalistic governments are now following a course leading to the repression of the activities of the Communist parties. Finally, in evaluating the statements which have been made by Soviet and satellite leaders, it is necessary to remember that the Soviet bloc is undergoing an economic crisis, particularly a shortage of consumer goods and foodstuffs. This crisis produces a general feeling of disaffection, not only among the people of the satellite countries, but among the people of the Soviet Union as well.
2. In the period immediately following Stalin's death, a great many of the Soviet people wondered what the new Government line would be and whether there would or would not be any improvement. Then after the Beriya affair the Soviet people were in a state of confusion and all kinds of rumors were rife. The Soviet leaders stopped writing about Stalin, thus implying that he actually was a dictator and that in many ways he was wrong. It is possible that, as a result of this studied absence of reference to Stalin on the part of the Soviet press and Soviet officials, no one in the Soviet Union is now studying

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Stalin's writings, and that the economic policies he promulgated are falling into disrepute. After the death of Stalin, the Government promised the people that there would be an increase in the production of various consumer goods and a number of resolutions publicizing this promise were put out which aroused some enthusiasm among the Soviet working and peasant classes, and even to some degree among the intelligentsia. However, after some months or perhaps a year, the results of these proclamations were negligible and the Government came to the conclusion that it was unable to fulfill its promises to the people. Neither was the Government successful in the field of foreign policy, since it must be considered that, although a measure of success was achieved in Indo-China, the result of the war in Korea was a setback for the Soviet bloc and not a victory.

3. All of these factors, and especially the deteriorating internal economic situation, are forcing the Soviet Union to adopt a series of revisions in its foreign policy. The Soviets are earnestly striving now to establish conditions which will permit a stabilization of the international situation for a period of some seven to ten years in order to consolidate their position and to prove to their people that the Soviet Union is in fact pursuing a policy of peaceful co-existence, and is not planning to take any steps which may lead to war. It is true that the average Soviet man has had it drilled into his ears that his life is one of constant struggle and that it is properly so until such time as certain socialistic goals are attained. However, long years have gone by without the achievement of these goals and the conditions of struggle which deprive the Soviet man of his personal life and happiness are continuing. This is an unnatural situation and the people are clamoring for a change.
4. The Soviet leaders are aware of this situation and, having discussed it with satellite leaders, have come to the conclusion that the resulting tension must be relieved to some degree. They consider that a program of partial disarmament is called for, in that less of the national effort would thereby be directed toward war preparation, and there would be less talk and concern about the possibility of war. This should not be interpreted to mean, however, that the Soviet Government will allow its military, scientific, and technical potential to diminish by any significant amount. Possibly a reduction of the size of the armed forces will take place, but no diminution of technical capability and war production capacity, or even of war production as such, will take place. This thought is based on the following analysis: first, the Soviet Union is obligated to supply military equipment to satellite countries and, second, the Soviet leaders probably feel that the number of Soviet war plants already built, while having the capacity to supply the present needs, should remain in operation to ensure sufficient war production to maintain the present relative position of the Soviet Union vis-à-vis the West. This Soviet attitude will obtain regardless of whether a disarmament formula is attained. The disarmament, thus, would be at the expense of any future expansion in the capacity of Soviet war plant facilities. This policy would allow any growth of Soviet industrial production which takes place to be channeled into civilian production.
5. Another important consideration is the strong desire on the part of the Soviet bloc to develop its trade with the West, which is essential if the present economic crisis is to be eased. All of these measures will go a long way toward the improvement of the internal situation and the strengthening of the regime within the Soviet bloc.
6. For these reasons, the Soviet Government is probably sincere in its avowed desire to improve the international situation, so that for the next seven to ten years a peaceful climate will prevail. The important thing to realize, however, is that this will in no way diminish the activity of the Soviet Government aimed at the exploitation and deepening of any and all differences among Western allies which may arise in the future, or of any internal difficulties which may beset any of the Western powers. The Soviets will take advantage of such situations regardless of their commitments in the field of foreign relations and, through local Communist movements and in other ways, will continue to exert a disruptive influence on internal conditions in the non-Communist countries.

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